

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANAA 876

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT

SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER ON INTERNAL AFFAIRS

REFS: SANAA 818, SANAA 475, SANAA 875

1. DURING APRIL 12 CALL, FONMIN ABDUALLHA AL-ASNAG PROVIDED ME WITH MORE DETAILS CONCERNING THE RECENT INTERNAL DIFFICULTIES WHICH WE HAVE COVERED IN OUR RECNET REPORTS. (SANAA 875) ALS-ASNAG STATED THAT MAIN SOURCE OF THE PROBLEMS IS SHAIKH AL-AHMAR'S INSISTENCE THAT HE BE GIVEN AN EVEN FREER HAND IN RUNNING YEMENI AFFAIRS. ASNAG CONTINUED THAT THE SAUDIS MUST SHARE THE BLAME FOR AL-AHMAR'S PRETENSIONS BECAUSE OF THEIR SUPPORT FOR AL-AHMAR AND OTHER TRADITIONALIST SHAIKHS AS INDIVIDUALS RATHER THAN THEIR SUPPORT FOR AL-HAMDI AS THE CHIEF OF STATE. ASNAG SAID THAT HE HAS ASKED PRESIDENTIAL ADVISER MOHAMMAD BASWINDWA TO STOP IN JIDDA ON HIS WAY BACK FROM HIS CURRENT TOUR OF ARAB CAPITALS (SANAA 475) TO SEE PRINCE SULTAN AND EXPLAIN TO HIM THE NEED FOR MORE POSITIVE AND LONG-TERM SAUDI APPROACH TO YEMEN. ASNAG SAID THAT HE HAS INSTRUCTED BASWINDWA TO BE COMPLETELY FRANK WITH SAUDIS AND TELL THE LATTER IF THE SAUDIS DO NOT SUPPORT HAMDI AND THE YEMEN GOVERNMENT, THEN HE FEARS THAT "THE SITUATION WILL GET OUT OF CONTROL".

2. ASNAG INFORMED ME THAT THE RECENT CRISIS WAS

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OVER SPECIFIC DEMANDS BY AL-AHMAR FOR IMMEDIATE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS AND THE FORMATION OF A NEW REPUBLICAN

COUNCIL. ASNAG SAID THAT AL-AHMAR'S CALL FOR AN OSTENSIBLE RETURN TO PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT IS MERELY A RUSE BY AL-AHMAR AND HIS SAHIKLY SUPPORTERS TO INSTALL A MORE CONSERVATIVE REGIME IN YEMEN. ASNAG SAID THAT AL-AHMAR AND THE SAUDIS ARE MISTAKEN IF THEY BELIEVE THAT THE YEMENI PEOPLE WOULD SUPPORT A FURTHER SHIFT TO THE RIGHT. ASNAG EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT SHOULD THIS HAPPEN THE "YOUNGER OFFICERS" IN THE ARMY MIGHT ORGANIZE A COUP AGAINST HAMDI AND THEN PROCEED TO MOVE AGAINST THE SHAIKHS IN THE SAME WAS AS HAS ALREADY HAPPENED IN SOUTH YEMEN.

3. ASNAG CONTINUED THAT HE RECENTLY HEARD THAT THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR HAS BEEN OBSERVING WITH SATISFACTION AND RELISH THE SIGHT OF THE TWO "SAUDI STOOGES" (HAMDI AND AL-AHMAR) AT LOGGERHEADS, BECAUSE THE SOVIET SEES THE PRESENT EPALEMATE AS SOON LEADING TO AN HLEN CONFRONTATION WHICH WILL IN THE NEAR FUTURE AFFORD THE LEFTISTS UNDER AL-AYNI THE OPPORTUNITY TO RETURN TO POWER. AL-ASNAG SAID THAT HAMDI AND AL-AHMAR HAVE NOW AGREED TO POSTPONE UNTIL JUNE 13, THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE AL-HAMDI TAKEOVER, THE QUESTION OF ELECTIONS AND OTHER CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS. (LOCAL PRESS AND RADIO ANNOUNCED ON APRIL 13 THAT THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD HAS BEEN EXTENDED UNTIL JUNE 13.) ASNAG CONCLUDED WITH THE HOPE, THAT IN THE

MEANTIME, THE SAUDIS AND THEIR LOCAL CLIENTS WOULD REALIZE THE GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION AND WORK WITH AL-HAMDI AND THE MODERATES FOR THE BENEFIT OF BOTH YEMEN AND SAUDI ARABIA.

4. COMMENT: ASNAG WAS GLOOMIER THAN I HAVE USUALLY FOUND HIM. IT WAS OBIVOUS THAT I IS GENUINELY CONCERNED THAT THE SOVIET AND LEFTIST EBHECTATIONS WILL BE FULLY REALIZED, GIVEN THE CONTINUED INABILITY OF THE SAUDIS AND AL-AHMAR TO SEE THE LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS OF A SPLIT BETWEEN YEMEN'S MODERATES AND CONSERVATIVES.
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I FRANKLY BELIEVE THAT SUCH A SPLIT WOULD NOT BE IN OUR INTERESTS NOR IN THOSE OF BOTH YEMEN AND SAUDI ARABIA. I HOPE, THEREFORE, THAT WE WILL BE ABLE TO PERSUADE THE SAUDIS TO PLAY A MORE HELPFUL ROLE IN YEMEN AND TO DO SO PROMPTLY LEST THE SITUATION FURTHER DETERIORATES.
SCOTES

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